



Catholic Social Services | Summer 2021

# Faces of Hope

*Ending homelessness one family at a time.*

## Enduring loss, finding hope

*When tragedy strikes, your support helps young people like Dylan and Melia make it through, and equips them for a brighter future.*

When Dylan lost his mom at 17, he found himself with few options. He couch-surfed for several weeks, trying to figure out how to get by. Dylan's girlfriend, Melia, knew about CSS's partnership program, Path to Independence (P2I). Her parents had been housed by the same program. They got in touch with case managers Faith and Jesse, and Dylan and Melia started working together toward independence.

Jesse helped Dylan and Melia find an apartment and rent assistance, and Faith worked with Dylan on his long-term goals: graduate high school, get a driver's license and birth certificate, and enroll in carpentry school. After a few months of working together, Faith attended Dylan's graduation. Dylan gave a speech during the ceremony and thanked Faith by name—Faith says it was one of the sweetest moments of her work as a case manager.



**ABOVE:** Dylan and Melia are all smiles as they recount how far they've come with Homeless Family Services.

Your support helped Dylan pay for the tools he needed for carpentry school and covered rent for the months that he was in training.

Dylan finished carpentry school and joined a labor union last June,

fulfilling a lifelong dream:

**"I've always had aspirations to join the carpenters' union, I'm a very hands-on person, I like building things and trying to make the world better. With construction, you can do that."**

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# Homelessness is hard;

Hard on the people who experience it, and hard on the community they live in. That's why we've made addressing homelessness in Anchorage a top priority for the last several years.



Last year, we housed  
**900 Alaskans**

Those 900 people are no longer experiencing homelessness, but living dignified lives and working toward permanent stability.

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In September, Dylan and Melia got married, holding the ceremony in the same home that Faith and Jesse housed Melia's parents in.

We're so proud of Dylan and Melia for making it through a tremendously difficult time in their lives and

moving towards independence. When hardship hits, your support provides people like Dylan and Melia with more than a roof; you give them the tools they need to live independent and stable lives.

**"It's so easy to fall through the cracks in the system. But Catholic Social Services and the supplementary programs give, at the least, a second chance. At the most, they help you for a lifetime."**

**-Dylan**



**ABOVE:** When Dylan's bike was stolen, a donor helped replace it so he could continue getting to and from work.



**LEFT:** Ryan has been helping Kamal develop his computer literacy skills.



**RIGHT:** Kamal enjoys biking around the city.

## Finding "the first bit of sunlight" in his life

*Through your support, Vietnam veteran Kamal is leading a life of dignity and peace, and looking forward to giving back to others.*

Kamal grew up in Harlem, New York, as the oldest of 11 children. His father was often away working, so he helped raise his siblings. "I come up hard," he says of his childhood. He left home at 15, and at 17 he enlisted for the Vietnam War, serving his country as a paratrooper.

When Kamal returned to the US, he lived and worked all over the country. His rough childhood in New York made him wary of big crowds, and loud noises and airplanes sometimes brought up trauma from the war.

"In life, trouble is constant. Life is beating me up," Kamal says, "But I always try to be my best self." As a brother, a worker, and a friend, Kamal was a positive role model for those around him. But over the years, he felt like people didn't take time to help each other.

Things began to turn around for

Kamal when he moved to Alaska in December 2020. Kamal says moving to Anchorage felt like "the first bit of sunlight" in his life. People acted differently toward him, took more time to listen.

However, Kamal didn't have a place to live in Anchorage and spent some time at shelters around the city until Ryan, a case manager with Homeless Family Services, helped line up the resources for Kamal to rent an apartment. Kamal says it's a "nice little apartment" and appreciates that there are families living nearby and he can hear children playing outside. "I come up hard," he says, "Now I'm learning to relax."

He also looks forward to helping others. Kamal hopes to mentor young men and give them guidance as they strike out on their own, drawing on the wisdom he's gathered in his own life. Yvonne,

the program manager of Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), takes pride in this: **"This program puts people in a position to give back."**

Kamal is incredibly grateful for the help he's received through Catholic Social Services. When he first started working with SSVF, he says, **"They counseled me, they showed me around. That's the total opposite of everything I've experienced with other agencies. I'll shout it from the rooftops."**

We are so proud of Kamal for the transition he is making toward a healthy and fruitful life here in Anchorage, and we look forward to seeing how he gives back to the community.

Thank you for supporting our veterans and enabling us to help them lead lives of dignity and peace.





## Looking back on a new first

*Your enthusiasm, support, and flexibility made it a wonderful Charity Ball.*

It's been a year of new experiences at Catholic Social Services, and one of those firsts was our first-ever virtual Charity Ball! Although we missed seeing everyone in the ballroom together, it was wonderful to see our loyal supporters come together and support our Anchorage community. Your dedication, support, and enthusiasm made the evening a great success!

With your help, we raised more than \$190,000 through the event! That money will be used to provide people like Dylan and Melia (from the cover story) with not only a roof, but the skills, items, and certifications they need to thrive, whether that's clothing, a high school diploma, construction tools, or education to join a labor union. By equipping our clients with more than a roof, you help people in need lead lives of dignity and self-respect.

We are so thankful to you and everyone who came together to make this year's Charity Ball success. The Charity Ball Committee gave an immense amount of time and treasure to organize the event and arrange all of our auction items; Kimberlee Colbo and Pat Byrne provided excellent leadership as the Committee chair and co-chair. Paul McGuire and Maria Downey led the evening as our auctioneer and emcee, and we were thrilled to work with such talented people. Jensen Hall Creative provided excellent technical direction, leading us through the challenges of our first virtual event. Special thanks to the Hotel Captain Cook staff who donate time and give space year after year. It was truly a team effort this year, and we're proud of how it all came together.

As always, none of this is possible without your enthusiasm and support. Thank you. Your support means so much to our neighbors in need and the community we serve.



**TOP:** Emcee Maria Downey and Auctioneer Paul McGuire wait for the virtual event to begin.

**MIDDLE:** Charity Ball Committee Member Rayli Wilson and CSS Staff member Katie Gordon give Mark Fineman, CSS Board Chair, his wine and food ahead of the evening.

**BOTTOM:** Charity Ball Committee Co-Chair Pat Byrne prepares food and wine packages at the Hotel Captain Cook.